

EXTENDING THE AGE RANGE OF THE ASSESSMENT BASE AT RUISLIP GARDENS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Cabinet Member & Portfolio	Cllr Susan O'Brien - Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education
Responsible Officer	Julie Kelly – Corporate Director Children Services
Report Author & Directorate	Abi Preston – Director of Education & SEND
Papers with report	Appendix 1 – Public Notice Appendix 2 – Full Proposal

HEADLINES

Summary	Cabinet is asked to consider the outcome of consultation and make a decision on the current age range of the Specialist Assessment Base for 3-5 years olds at Ruislip Gardens Primary School to include 2-year-olds when appropriate and necessary in exceptional circumstances.
Putting our Residents First Delivering on the Council Strategy 2022-2026	This report supports our ambition for residents / the Council of: An efficient, well-run, digital-enabled council working with partners to deliver services to improve the lives of all our residents This report supports our commitments to residents of: Thriving, Healthy Households This also supports the emerging Education Strategy of the Council.
Financial Cost	Funding will remain the same for all pupils on roll at Ruislip Gardens. This proposal does not impact the financial model in place with the school.
Select Committee	Children, Families and Education Select Committee
Ward(s)	All / South Ruislip

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet:

1. Have regard to the 12 responses from the consultation;
2. Agree the proposal to expand the current age range of the Specialist Assessment Base for 3-5 years olds at Ruislip Gardens Primary School to include 2-year-olds when appropriate and necessary in exceptional circumstances.

Reasons for recommendation

School place planning is a statutory function of the Council as a Local Education Authority (LEA) and involves liaison with all schools and Trusts in the borough, and with neighbouring Councils. The duty is to have a sufficiency of school places to meet parent demand across the borough including for all children, including those with Special Education Needs & Disabilities (SEND).

With the growing number of children with EHCPs nationally and in Hillingdon, early identification will allow the Council to ensure that children are placed in the correct type of school setting to meet their identified needs and also support planning for SEND sufficiency in Hillingdon schools.

To help meet this demand, Officers consulted on the proposal to expand the current age range of the Specialist Assessment Base for 3-5 years olds at Ruislip Gardens Primary School from January 2025 to include 2-year-olds when appropriate and necessary in exceptional circumstances. Cabinet is asked to consider the consultation set out in this report and determine whether to proceed with the proposed changes.

Alternative options considered / risk management

The Specialist Assessment Base is currently open for 3–5-year olds at Ruislip Gardens Primary School and this proposal seeks to expand the age range of that provision to include 2-year-olds when appropriate and necessary in exceptional circumstance. This proposal further supports early intervention to be available for children in Hillingdon.

Democratic compliance / previous authority

Under the Council's Constitution, Cabinet authority is required to determine school organisational changes where there are objections received.

Select Committee comments

This proposal was discussed at the Children, Families & Education Select Committee meeting on 13th November 2024, and the following comments were agreed following the meeting:

"The Committee supports the proposal to extend the age range of the assessment base at Ruislip Gardens Primary School. The inclusion of 2-year-olds when appropriate and necessary in exceptional circumstances will allow the Council to identify needs much earlier. This early assessment will ensure that correct support is provided so that children are able to progress

according to their needs and abilities. This will also enable the families of those children to receive the support from multi agencies as appropriate.”

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Ruislip Gardens Primary School is a community-maintained school. It was built as a 3 Form of Entry (FE) school but was reduced to 2FE due to a declining roll. The reduction in the Published Admissions Number (PAN) provided capacity to accommodate a Specialist Assessment Base and a Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) which opened in Summer 2024.
2. Due to an increase in children with additional needs, early identification is key to ensuring that the Council are able to provide the right support, at the right time and the right place. This proposal is to extend the age range of the Specialist Assessment Base to include 2-year-old children in some exceptional circumstances, when it is appropriate and necessary, as approved by the Early Health Notification panel. Exceptional circumstances may include admission of a 2-year-old child who is due to be three within the next term, or admission of a 2-year-old child with very complex medical needs for assessment.
3. Officers and the school are in agreement of this proposal, which will allow the placement of 2-year-old children subject to the Early Health Notification Panel approval, in exceptional circumstances.
4. One of the Council's objectives is to better monitor 0–5-year-old children with SEND, to provide them with appropriate provision and improve targeted support where needed. The established Early Years Tracking Panel is helping to support this work.

Specialist Assessment Base

5. The Specialist Assessment Base is the first of its kind in the Borough, and the school continues to develop the provision alongside the SEND services in the Council but also draw on various models from other local authorities.
6. This provision currently meets the demand for specialist teaching and further diagnosis of young children aged 3 – 5 who clearly have additional needs but may not have one obvious need. The pupils are assessed to plan the best future education provision to meet their needs. The assessment base has been created to accommodate 16 full time places and is located on the ground floor of the main building and includes 2 classrooms, therapy and group spaces.
7. The Specialist Assessment Base will allow the Council to identify needs much earlier and therefore provide the correct support so that children are able to progress in line with their ability and their families receive the support from multi agencies as appropriate.
8. Officers have been liaising with the Headteacher and have the full support of the Governing Body with the proposal.

Financial Implications

Funding will remain the same for all pupils on roll at Ruislip Gardens. This proposal does not impact the financial model in place with the school.

Ruislip Gardens has a positive surplus balance. The Council finance and operational teams will continue to work with and support the school during this process.

RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities?

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient places for every resident pupil.

The Council must plan, organise and commission places for all state-funded schools in Hillingdon to ensure high standards are maintained, diverse school communities supported, and sufficient places are available. As part of this ongoing review and in line with [Hillingdon Local Area SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2023-28 - Hillingdon Council](#). This proposal will meet *Ambition 1: The right support, at the right time, in the right place* and *Ambition 3: Provision meets the needs of Hillingdon's children and young people*.

Consultation & Engagement carried out (or required)

Formal consultation on the proposal to expand the current age range of the Specialist Assessment Base for 3-5 years olds at Ruislip Gardens Primary School to include 2-year-olds, when appropriate and necessary in exceptional circumstances, started on 25th September 2024 at 9am and ended on 25th October 2024 at 5pm. Public Notice of the proposals is set out in **Appendix 1** and the full proposal consulted on in **Appendix 2**. The Public Notice was published in the Gazette on 25th September and copies were put up surrounding the school site for the start of the consultation.

Statutory Process

The prescribed alterations require a minimum of a 4-week consultation period. The formal consultation was designed to ensure that the following received notification of the consultation, in line with the guidance "Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools":

- the governing body/local authority (as appropriate);
- the parents of every registered pupil at the school – where the school is a special school;
- if it involves or is likely to affect a school which has been designated as having a religious character:
 - the Diocesan Boards of Education for any diocese of the CofE any part of which is comprised in the area of the local authority;
 - the bishop(s) of a diocese of the RC Church any part of which is comprised in the area of the local authority; or
 - the relevant faith group in relation to the school; and
- any other body or person that the proposer thinks is appropriate e.g., any affected educational institutions in the area, or neighbouring local authorities.

Proposals affecting a special school should go to any local authority that has commissioned a place at the school (i.e., all relevant authorities who have made an out of county/borough placement there).

The consultation document was available from Wednesday 25th September to Friday 25th October 2024 on the consultation page of the Hillingdon Council website. This included a brief outline of the proposed change, the full proposal, and a questionnaire to obtain feedback in direct response to each proposal.

Information regarding the consultation was publicised to all the schools within the Borough by email.

As Hillingdon Council also receives school place applications from residents who live outside of the Borough, the consultation was designed to be inclusive. Therefore, officers contacted the following surrounding Local Authorities:

- London Borough of Ealing
- London Borough of Hounslow
- London Borough of Brent
- London Borough of Harrow
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Buckinghamshire County Council
- Slough Borough Council

The details of the proposal were also shared with the Parent Carer Forum.

A virtual Question and Answer session with Officers took place on Tuesday 1st October 2024 from 5pm to 6pm for stakeholders to have the opportunity to ask questions about the proposal. There were no attendees.

There was also a drop-in session at the school where Officers were on hand to answer any questions in person and to explain the proposal as necessary. This was held in the afternoon on Thursday 3rd October 2024 for stakeholders such as parents, guardians and residents. There were no attendees.

Consultation Responses

12 responses were received in total during the consultation period and submitted via the online questionnaire and none were received by email. The responses are summarised below.

During the consultation period, there were 29 page views of the Council's consultation page for Ruislip Gardens Primary school.

Online Questionnaire responses are summarised below:

1. **11** agreed with the proposal to expand the age range to include 2 year olds to access the Specialist Assessment Base at Ruislip Gardens Primary School in exceptional circumstances
 - Yes - 11
 - No - 1
 - Don't know – 0
2. Of the **1** respondent that answered 'No' or 'Don't know', reasons have been summarised below.
3. **0** agreed that the proposed changes will disadvantage any Hillingdon residents.
 - Yes - 0
 - No - 10
 - Don't know – 2
4. **0** respondent agreed that the changes will disadvantage Hillingdon residents.
5. 12 respondents are confirmed their interest in the proposal as:
 - A parent/ Carer/guardian – 4
 - A staff member – 1
 - A local resident – 4
 - Other – 1
 - Prefer not to say – 2
6. **10** respondents stated that they have children under the age of 18 living in their household.
7. Respondents were invited to state which school(s) their child(ren) currently attend, and the responses were as follows:
 - Ruislip Gardens Primary School – 2
 - Coteford Junior School – 1
 - Lady Bankes Primary School – 1
 - Queensmead School – 1
 - Newham (non-specified) - 1
 - Ruislip High School – 1
 - Ryefield Primary School – 2
 - Not specified - 1
8. There were several comments from the questionnaire which are contained in the background papers section of the report.

Conclusion

The formal statutory consultation helped to collate views and queries from stakeholders such as parents/carers, residents and staff.

The consultation process outlined support from all but one responder with 91% of respondents supportive of the proposal. Whilst one response was not in agreement to the proposal to expand the current age range of the Specialist Assessment Base for 3-5 years olds at Ruislip Gardens Primary School to include 2-year-olds, when appropriate and necessary in exceptional circumstances, there was instead a suggestion to increase the age range for older children, rather than allow for younger children in the Assessment Base.

This response has been noted and the expectation is when children are of statutory school age and the school has identified a child with potential SEND (where they have put in a graduated support offer and the child is not making the progress) staff would make a referral for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) to ensure the correct support is in place for the child.

Therefore, there is already significant provision in Hillingdon to support the assessment of children of statutory school age, as this can be carried out in all mainstream settings. For children and young people with an EHCP, their needs can be met within either mainstream or specialist provision as appropriate to their assessed needs.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance have reviewed this report and concur with the Financial Implications set out above, noting there are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

Legal

There are no legal impediments to the recommendation within the report. Local authorities may propose changes to the age range of one or more-year groups for community schools, which includes adding or removing a nursery provision. They can do so by complying with the statutory process for prescribed alterations. The local authority must have regard to the consultation in coming to a decision.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Making significant changes \('prescribed alterations'\) to maintained schools. Area guidelines and net capacity - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Individual Consultation Responses](#)